

**WILLIAMSBURG PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PUBLIC HEARING
Wednesday, June 7, 2006**

A special meeting of the Williamsburg Planning Commission was held on Wednesday, June 7, 2006, at 7:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers at the Stryker Building, 412 North Boundary Street.

ATTENDANCE AND CALL TO ORDER

Present were Commissioners Young, Pons, Hertzler, Kafes and McBeth. Absent was Commissioner Rose. Also present were Planning Director Nester and Zoning Administrator Murphy.

Mr. Young called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and announced that the meeting was advertised as a public hearing on the 2006 Comprehensive Plan. He noted that there have been seven previously held community conversations, plus open forums at 38 Planning Commission work sessions.

Mr. Nester made a brief presentation on the proposed 2006 Comprehensive Plan, noting the following:

- The City's population in 2005 is 13,400, and this is projected to grow to 19,000 at build-out.
- Existing land use is 17% residential, 5% commercial, 23% institutional, 32% parks and sensitive environmental areas, and 11% vacant and suitable for development.
- The basic elements of the "housing plan" are:
 - Preserve and protect the City's single-family neighborhoods
 - Encourage a greater residential presence in the Center City area
 - Encourage new mixed-use neighborhoods. New higher density housing should take place in a master planned mixed-use context, such as in High Street Williamsburg and Quarterpath at Williamsburg.
 - Limit high density residential development to existing areas.
 - Encourage the development of low and moderate income owner-occupied housing in appropriate locations.
 - Develop an adequate solution to college student housing.
 - When this Housing Plan is translated to land use, there is a potential for approximately 700 new single-family homes, and 1,800 new multi-family dwellings. Of these new dwellings, 68% are estimated for owner-occupancy, and 32% for rental-occupancy. Based on the 2000 Census, and the type of development anticipated, the City should have approximately 4,000 owner-occupied dwellings (56%) and approximately 3,200 renter-occupied dwellings (44%) at build-out. This compares to the 2000 Census figure of 1,602 owner-occupied dwellings (44%) and 2,017 renter-occupied dwellings (56%).

- The basic elements of the “commercial and economic development plan” are:
 - Maintain the Merchants Square area as the City’s premier high quality commercial area.
 - Encourage businesses to locate adjacent to the College of William and Mary.
 - Promote Richmond Road between Brooks Street and the Williamsburg Shopping Center as a unified Mixed-Use Area.
 - Encourage the “Shopping Centers Area” to serve as the centerpiece of the City’s urban commercial corridor.
 - Promote the City’s entrance corridors as the primary location for tourist-oriented businesses.
 - Support development of High Street Williamsburg and Quarterpath at Williamsburg as the City’s primary mixed-use developments.
 - Provide opportunities for additional mixed-use development on Penniman Road and Ironbound Road.
 - Maintain appropriately located areas for office use throughout the City.
- Major transportation improvements include:
 - Ironbound Road widening – 4 lanes (Longhill Connector to Richmond Road)
 - Quarterpath Road widening/improvements – 2 lane minor arterial street (York Street to Route 199)
 - Bikeway improvements to improve connections between existing facilities and construct new multi-use paths along Quarterpath Road and Kiwanis Park/Treyburn Drive area
 - Sidewalk Improvements throughout the City.
- Parks and Recreation improvements include new passive parks: Capitol Landing, Redoubt Park, and College Creek Parks, as well as improvements to Kiwanis Park and Strawberry Plains Neighborhood Park.
- Municipal Center Improvements include a new Building for Williamsburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority and Human Services Department, a new Emergency Operation Center and Fire Department Administrative Offices, a new or renovated City Council Chamber and City Hall (Stryker Building), and a new Ironbound Road Fire Station.

Mr. Young opened the public hearing.

Bill Dell, 322 Indian Springs Road, stated his opposition to the proposed traffic signal at the intersection of Jamestown Road and Campus Drive. He noted the expanded college uses that will impact this area: new parking garage, renovated amphitheater, new business school, and the Barksdale dorms. He said that there are other alternatives available to alleviate the increasing traffic on Jamestown Road. He noted how difficult it is becoming to get out of residential areas along Jamestown Road. He said that the residents have no option but to use Jamestown Road, but the College has numerous other options – making Campus Drive one-way in from Jamestown Road, utilizing Compton Drive as a major entrance, using the entrance by the Stadium, etc.

He said that the City needs to consider these other alternatives instead of promoting a traffic signal.

David Kranbuehl, 201 Harrison Avenue, noted the following:

- He agrees with Bill Dell. The major entrance to the College needs to be off of Monticello Avenue. Traffic needs to be relieved in the key focus areas – there is no need for a new traffic signal.
- He has no problem with an option to expand Bed & Breakfast uses. The idea is to keep the neighborhoods as residential areas. A special use permit needs to be required for additional rooms – expansion may be acceptable in some cases, but unacceptable in others. Expansion should be in states – possibly to six rooms initially. If B&Bs are turned into small hotels, there could be negative effects on smaller operations.
- He is greatly troubled with a commercial use not discussed in the Comprehensive Plan (the Busch Entertainment request for a special use permit to lease 20 rooms in the Econo Lodge on Capitol Landing Road to rent to Russian students). This will turn a hotel into a dormitory, transforming a street into a different type of environment. The fact that it has been rammed through has upset him, since it is a major change in the concepts of uses in the City. It is irresponsible to allow this when it is not even addressed in the Plan.

Leo Daugherty, 400 Harriet Tubman Drive, expressed concerns about the new WRHA building proposed between Crispus Attucks and the Blayton Building. He said this will effect him the most, since he is on the corner of Harriet Tubman and Armistead. The building will increase traffic and congestion, as well as the noise level for the neighborhood.

Terence Wehle, 412 Harriet Tubman Drive, also criticized the proposed WRHA building, and said that there is a feeling of beauty for the field next to his neighborhood, which has been there for over 30 years. He noted that one of the goals of the Comprehensive Plan is to encourage the conservation of open space. He noted that the zoning is proposed to change from RM-2 to B-1, with the density increasing from 14 to 22 units/net acre. He said that it is clear that the Comprehensive Plan wants to have this property developed in some way. He said that many residents are upset by the plan, and it was understood by many that this property would never be developed. He said that more public discussion is needed, and suggested a model showing the affect of higher density.

Stephanie Smith, 106 Walnut Hills Drive, said that she represents the Active Williamsburg Alliance. She addressed several topics:

- The Community Character chapter discusses greenbelts, which are discussed as passive green space. They could be actively used to provide a network of trails for cyclists and pedestrians.

- The Plan should endorse working with James City County to preserve Carter's Grove Country Road as a public bicycle and pedestrian facility.
- Quarterpath Road should be used as a multi-use path to preserve the character of the area.
- Modifying roads and intersections to make the community more walkable should be investigated. She suggested a roundabout as a possible solution to the Jamestown Road/Campus Drive intersection.
- All signalized intersections should include accommodations for bicycles and pedestrians.
- A comprehensive system is needed for bicycle parking – parking stanchions could be turned into a community art project.
- The City should work closely with James City and York Counties to coordinate bicycle and pedestrian issues.

Kyra Cook, 315 Penniman Road, said that she supports the Plan's recommendation for Mixed Use land use on Penniman Road. She said that she is in an existing "mixed-use" area, but her house is nonconforming in the B-3 District. She said this is a good walkable area for mixed use development.

Susan Gaston, representing the Williamsburg Area Association of Realtors, made the following points:

- They strongly support workforce housing.
- They support the City's efforts to improve housing opportunities and provide more affordable housing, as stated in the Plan, specifically:
 - Preserve and protect the City's single-family neighborhoods.
 - Encourage a greater residential presence in the Center City area.
 - Encourage new mixed-use neighborhoods.
 - Encourage development of low and moderate income housing (but not limited to owner-occupied housing)
 - Develop an adequate solution to College student housing.
- They are concerned with efforts to promote owner-occupied housing. The attempts to reduce the number of rental units in the City could ultimately backfire. Telling an owner that they cannot rent their property has the potential to create economic hardships.

Susan Patton, 505 Capitol Court, Aldrich House B&B, supported more flexibility for B&B uses. She said that expansions to B&B uses, if done in a way that meets local standards, should not be a negative for the City.

Matt Beato, Cary Street, W&M student, addressed several sections of the Plan:

- He favors commercial development adjacent to the College. The ideal site is as identified by the Plan – the Richmond Road/Scotland Street area. There needs to be an independent development serving college students.

- There is a misconception that there is a lack of on-campus housing. Everyone in the lottery that wants on-campus housing has been able to find it. People who live off-campus do so because they want to – they want greater independence. There is a market for additional off-campus housing. He supports the Plans recommendation of student housing south of Berkeley Middle School, which would be good for both students and the community at large.
- He supports the multi-use path between the campus and New Town, which provides a needed safe pedestrian connection.
- He enjoys living in a rental property. Students bring a lot to the community. He doesn't want to see students discriminated against because of a few bad apples.

With no one else wishing to speak, Mr. Young closed the public hearing.

Mr. Pons asked about the language in the Plan dealing with the WRHA building. Mr. Nester reviewed the Municipal Center master plan map, showing a 9,000 square foot building with an adjacent parking lot. On question by Mr. Hertzler, Mr. Nester outlined the review process for this building. Mr. Young noted that there would be many opportunities for public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Jesse Young, Chairman
Williamsburg Planning Commission